

Criminal graffiti is not art... it is a CRIME!

The unauthorized application of graffiti to public or private property is a criminal act. Around the world graffiti defaces the urban landscape. The nearly undecipherable scrawling seen in our neighborhoods isn't merely an eyesore. It is a signal to residents, business owners and police that the area will decay unless the problem is brought under control.

Who Does Criminal Graffiti? Why?

TAGGING This is the most common type in Eugene-Springfield. Recognition or fame motivates the tagger. Tags take the form of often unreadable words or initials, elaborate designs or bubble-style letters. Tags can derive from a unique name, street name or moniker. Taggers' tools are spray paint, large-tipped pens, devices which etch glass, or adhesive material used to apply tags to a surface.

A group of taggers is called a "crew", and a common value among crews is non-conformity to rules or authority. Taggers often refer to themselves as "street artists" or "writers" and to their tags as "art." They don't view their acts as unlawful, believing that it is self-expression. However, their acts of vandalism to public and private property add up to thousands of dollars in restoration costs every day.

GANG GRAFFITI Graffiti is a gang's means of identifying "turf", proclaiming superiority over other gangs, and issuing challenges and threats to rivals. Unlike tagger graffiti, this type of graffiti will commonly spell out a gang name, their geographic origin or a numeric identifier. It can sometimes show an entire list of gang nicknames called a "roll call" or "roster".

SKINHEAD/HATE CRIME GRAFFITI Rather than using graffiti to claim turf or intimidate rivals, racist skinheads use graffiti to spread racist and neo-Nazi beliefs. Their intimidation often targets Jews, people of color, gays and lesbians.

Whether it is gang related, hate crime or tagger graffiti, the result is the same: decreased property values, vandalized public assets, and increased fear and anger among residents, business owners and other citizens.

Psychological Effects of Graffiti

Criminal graffiti makes people feel that the neighborhood is being lost to gangs and lawlessness. If allowed to remain, graffiti becomes a highly visible sign of urban decay, sending a message of lawlessness and a neighborhood unconcerned about its appearance. It instills fear and a feeling of vulnerability.



Prevention Strategies

Keep taggers away from target surfaces with dense vegetation or thorny plants against building walls and fencing next to buildings. Add security lighting in dark areas. Design buildings with surfaces that can be easily repainted or use glazed tiles or materials with anti-graffiti coatings. Avoid unpainted, textured materials like concrete, brick, stone, stucco, and stained or unfinished wood.

Should I File a Police Report?

Tagging incidents that result in significant property damage and/or that involve known suspects, or tagging incidents that are in progress should be reported to the Eugene Police non-emergency line at 682-5111. If you believe the graffiti to be gang related, notify the police so the graffiti can be photographed as soon as possible.

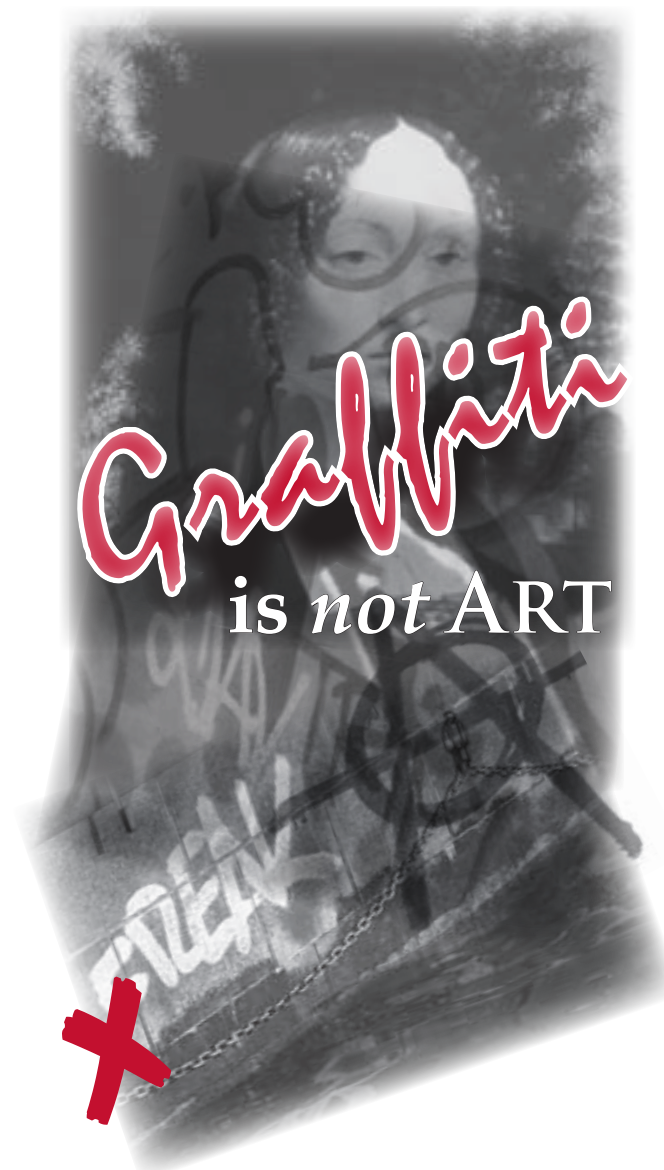
For more information

POLICE ASSISTANCE AND REPORTING
(541) 682-5111

GRAFFITI REMOVAL OPTIONS
(541) 682-4800
www.eugene-or.gov



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Tips for discouraging criminal graffiti in your neighborhood



Economic Effects of Graffiti

When graffiti exists in a neighborhood, outsiders who may be considering opening a business or buying a home are likely to feel uneasy; they may choose to look elsewhere. Who wants to move to a blighted, decaying community? In addition, longtime residents and business owners may also think about relocating before it’s too late!

Graffiti undermines community development, especially those efforts aimed at bringing in new businesses. Neighborhoods blighted by graffiti may find it particularly difficult to attract revitalizing investments.

In addition to long-term effects, the immediate cost of removing graffiti can run into tens of thousands of dollars in private and public expense.

Graffiti Attracts Graffiti

Taggers derive excitement and thrill from tagging as many places as possible, and they often compete for recognition. Allowing graffiti to remain is equivalent to the “Broken Window Syndrome” – allowing one broken window to go un-repaired will attract others to be broken as well.

In addition to being an attractive nuisance, graffiti also invites violence. Gang members intentionally deface other gangs’ graffiti, perpetuating the cycle of violence. To allow another gang’s graffiti to go unchallenged is contrary to the essence of gang philosophy.



What is Eugene Doing to Fight Graffiti?

The City’s Police and Public Works departments have an active anti-graffiti program. The program includes a computerized system for photographing and tracking graffiti. The graffiti database is capable of linking graffiti or tag designs to specific individuals, and it also can be used to identify problems and trends in geographic areas in order to focus graffiti-suppression efforts.

Under state law, “unlawfully applying graffiti” and “unlawfully possessing graffiti implements” are violations and punishable by a fine. In addition to a fine, a defendant may be ordered to perform hours of community service in order to remove graffiti. A person can also be charged with criminal mischief, which can be a misdemeanor or felony charge, depending on the dollar amount of damage or restoration costs. These crimes are punishable with higher fines and the possibility of jail time.

An effort of this program is to continue building on the partnerships between law enforcement and the judicial system, with the hope to develop consistency in the prosecution and restitution of offenders.

The City also has developed a public education and information campaign with a focus on reducing the tolerance for graffiti in our community. If you have questions about graffiti-removal options for your property, call Eugene Public Works Maintenance at 682-4800.

What to Do About Graffiti

The best thing to do is to paint over it— immediately! Graffiti which attracts attention and generates anger when first “thrown” draws less and less attention as time goes by. Within just a few days it tends to blend in, becoming part of the landscape. Its negative effect, however, continues long after it has become a party of the scenery.

Local paint stores can provide helpful information and materials to remove graffiti. Building and painting contractors may be able to recommend building surfaces that are easier to clean. The City of Eugene recognizes that graffiti is a community problem. By working together, we can make our community a safer and more attractive place.

Helpful Tips for Graffiti Removal

QUICK RESPONSE Don’t let graffiti last more than 24 hours. Blocking it out works, but total removal or blended repainting works best.

WASH IT OFF Paint dries to the touch fairly fast but takes longer to cure. If you act quickly, complete removal may be possible with no further painting required. Washing makes color coverage easier when repainting.

The challenge is to remove graffiti without damaging the underlying finish. Special care is critical on transparent finishes like varnished doors. You may want to consult with a professional before risking permanent damage to the surface. Start with the mildest cleaner, working up to stronger ones until you get results. Test small areas first.

- Try detergent and water.
- Mineral spirits are effective on uncured graffiti.
- Methanol is effective on uncured graffiti, but will likely dissolve a latex painted surface.

- Lacquer thinner, acetone and water rinseable semi-paste paint remover will remove graffiti, but may damage surfaces.
- Solvents used for removals from stained or unfinished wood may carry the graffiti into the wood surface.

Use paper towels or disposable wipes and change them frequently, or try a plastic scrub pad or stiff bristle brush.

Remember to wear hand, eye and respiratory protection as required, and safely dispose of solvent-soaked wipes to prevent spontaneous combustion.

A pressure washer designed to work with warm water may be helpful, but it’s usually best to soften and reduce graffiti with other methods first. Be careful not to damage the surface with too much pressure.

BLOCK IT OUT Solvent-based and water-based paints are available for matching colors. Some surfaces require more than one coat. Allow one coat to dry completely before applying a second coat.

BLEND IT IN Save paint from an original paint job for touch ups. If you have none and have no record of the original paint, most paint suppliers are capable of custom matching colors and sheens. Use inexpensive disposable applicators to ease your convenience and speed. Learn what is easy, cheap and effective and keep needed materials handy.



Consult your local paint store for professional advice and clarifications on the pros and cons of graffiti removal techniques.